

APPLICATION FOR UNITED STATES LETTERS PATENT

by

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for a

ANTI-RATTLE DOOR ASSEMBLY

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ANTI-RATTLE DOOR ASSEMBLY

[0001] This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/419,961, filed October 22, 2002, which is herein incorporated by reference in its entirety.

BACKGROUND

Field of the Invention

[0002] The present invention relates generally to an anti-rattle door assembly, and more particularly, to a vehicle door incorporating such an assembly.

Background of the Invention

[0003] Currently almost all vehicles that are equipped with a tailgate, e.g., sport utility, station wagon, and the like, have some kind of mechanism to stabilize the tailgate assembly in the cross car and up and down directions of the vehicle. Most commonly used systems are wedges made of plastic or rubber. Some of these systems have a built-in adjustment feature that allows a user to adjust the systems to achieve an optimal balance between closing efforts and stability. In such systems, a wedge is received in a wedge receiver which slides relative to the wedge, thus causing high frictional forces between them and contributing to high closing efforts. Any misalignment of the parts, which can occur over lifetime, e.g., door sag, can disrupt the relation of the two mating components relative to each other. This results in high operation efforts to close the door.

[0004] U.S. Patent No. 5,937,585 discloses an anti-rattle door assembly. The assembly includes a first member on a vehicle door and a second member which is provided on a part of the vehicle defining the door. The first member includes a

roller serving as a guide for directing alignment between the first member and the second member. The roller is rotatably mounted on a base plate. When the door is closed, the roller traverses along a tapered face of a recess provided within the second member so that the roller rolls up the upwardly inclined ramp, thereby lifting the vehicle door and aligning the first and second members. The roller is then received in a semi-circular recess having a diameter which is slightly larger than that of the roller. Wedge elements in cooperation with springs stabilize the position of the roller within the recess and the position of the first member with respect to the second member.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0005] The present invention is an anti-rattle door assembly. The present invention is an anti-rattle door assembly providing better adjustment features that allow users to adjust the assembly. A preferred embodiment of the invention provides an anti-rattle door assembly for a vehicle that includes a first member and a second member. The first member is disposed on a door of the vehicle and the second member is disposed on a part of the vehicle that defines the door. The first member includes a first base plate and a roller on the first base plate. The second member is configured to receive the roller of the first member. The second member includes a depression to receive the roller when the door is closed. The second member also includes a bumper element that at least partly encloses the roller when the door is closed (i.e., when the first member and the second member are engaged). The bumper element ensures that there is no noise when the door is closed. It assists to dampen the swing tailgate-closing event by absorbing part of the energy. It also helps to maintain a force on the

roller to keep the gate from chocking during driving or when the vehicle is being accelerated or decelerated.

[0006] Preferably, the roller is provided with a section of high lubricity at the outer circumference thereof, thereby reducing high friction forces during operation of the door. Further, preferably, the section of high lubricity is a ring mounted around the outer circumference of the roller.

[0007] In order to assist adjustment of the assembly, the second member may include a second base plate and a roller receiving part that is adjustable relative to the second base plate. Preferably, the roller receiving part includes at least one groove for partial engagement of the second base plate in order to ensure that the positioning direction is defined.

[0008] Further, the roller is adjustable relative to the first base plate before fixing it thereto. Preferably, wedged means are provided at the roller and at the roller base for mutual engagement to assist in positioning of the roller relative to the roller base. Furthermore, one of the roller and the roller base may include a dovetail halving and the other one of the roller and the roller base may include a complementary dovetail halving to define the positioning direction of the first member. The arrangement should be such that also orthogonal positioning with respect to the adjustment of the second member is possible. For example, if an adjustment of the second member in horizontal direction is attempted, the first member can be positioned in vertical direction.

[0009] Another aspect of the invention provides for a vehicle door incorporating an anti-rattle door assembly as defined above.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

- [0010] Figure 1 is a perspective view of a first member of an anti-rattle door assembly according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention.
- [0011] Figure 2 is a perspective view of a second member of an anti-rattle door assembly according to the preferred embodiment of the present invention.
- [0012] Figure 3 shows an anti-rattle door assembly accordingly to the preferred embodiment of the present invention.
- [0013] Figure 4 shows the second member of an anti-rattle door assembly provided on a part of a vehicle defining a door according to the preferred embodiment of the present invention.
- [0014] Figure 5 is a perspective view of an anti-rattle door assembly according to another preferred embodiment of the present invention.
- [0015] Figure 6 is a perspective view of an anti-rattle door assembly according to another preferred embodiment of the present invention.
- [0016] Figure 7 is a perspective view of a first member of an anti-rattle door assembly according to another preferred embodiment of the present invention.
- [0017] Figure 8 is a perspective view of a second member of an anti-rattle door assembly according to another preferred embodiment of the present invention.
- [0018] Figure 9 shows an anti-rattle door assembly provided on a vehicle according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0019] References will now be made in detail to preferred embodiments of the present invention, and examples of which are illustrated in the accompanying drawings.

[0020] The anti-rattle door assembly in the present invention includes a first member to be mounted on a door of a vehicle and a second member to be mounted on a part of the vehicle defining the door (i.e., a door post of the vehicle). Figures 1 and 2 show the first member and the second member of the anti-rattle door assembly, respectively, according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention.

[0021] Figure 1 is a perspective view of first member 110 of an anti-rattle door assembly according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention. First member 110 includes a wedge-shaped base plate 30 and a roller 40 mounted on base plate 30. Base plate 30 is, when in use, attached to a door of a vehicle by suitable fastener 42, for example a screw. Roller 40 is mounted on base plate 30 so that roller 40 is adjustable in vertical direction, as indicated by the arrow Y. Preferably, roller 40 has cylindrical shape and is made of a tough plastic material, such as Nylon® or polybutyleneter-ephthalate (PBT). A roller ring 44 is mounted around roller 40. Preferably, roller ring 44 is made of a plastic material that has high lubricity, such as acetal, in particular polyvinyl acetal. Therefore, even though roller 40 is fixed to base plate 30 and cannot rotate, roller 40 can smoothly slide into a roller receiving part 20 (shown in Figure 2) in a second member 120 of the anti-rattle assembly of the present invention. To assist adjustment, base plate 30 includes a dovetail-shaped recess 32,

into which a wedge is cut. Roller 40 carries a complementary wedge on its back side facing dovetail-shaped recess 32.

[0022] Figure 2 is a perspective view of second member 120 of an anti-rattle door assembly according to the preferred embodiment of the present invention. Second member 120 includes a base plate 10. Base plate 10 is, when in use, attached to a part of a vehicle defining the door or a frame of the door. Base plate 10 includes a ratchet at the surface facing the door post of the vehicle to help with the assembly and adjustment of the anti-rattle door assembly. Second member 120 includes inclined rails 12 at the upper and lower edges of base plate 10 and a roller receiving part 20. Inclined rails 12 are received in respective grooves 22 of roller receiving part 20. Once the adjustment is completed, base plate 10 may be fixed to the door post by suitable fasteners 14. Grooves 22 of roller receiving part 20 are slightly longer than rails 12 in order to allow horizontal displacement, as indicated by arrow X, of roller receiving part 20 with respect to base plate 10. Roller receiving part 20 and base plate 10 then may be fixed relative to one another by suitable means. Roller receiving part 20 has a guide recess 28 configured to receive roller 40. Guide recess 28 includes a substantially semi-circular abutment face with a semi-circular cut-out 26, in which a bumper element 24 is mounted. Bumper element 24 is preferably made of a dampening material, such as rubber or the like.

[0023] To adjust a system, the operator positions roller 40 relative to roller base 30 and snug fastener 42. Then the operator closes the door so that roller 40 engages receiving recess 28. Roller 40 moves along the ratchet and is thereby set in the correct position. Then, the operator fixes fastener 42 fully. On the receiver side, the

operator can position roller receiving part 20 with respect to base plate 10 to ensure that roller 40 comes close to the bumper element 24 when the door is closed.

[0024] The position of the ratchet is irrelevant to the assembly of the invention, principally it can be anywhere on the door, provided its functions can be performed.

[0025] Figure 3 shows the roller 40 within receiving recess 28. For the sake of clarity, all other components of the anti-rattle door assembly are omitted. A depression 21 is provided at the bottom part of guide recess 28 in which roller 40 rests after it has passed ramp 23. As the roller 40 slides in at the fully closed position of the door, it drops, preferably, by about 1.5 mm to further stabilize the door.

[0026] Figure 4 shows the second member of an anti-rattle door assembly provided on a part of a vehicle defining a door according to the preferred embodiment of the present invention.

[0027] In an alternate embodiment, the first member may be disposed on a door of the vehicle and the second member may be disposed on a part of the vehicle that defines the door.

[0028] The features disclosed in the foregoing description, in the claims and/or in the accompanying drawings may, both separately and in any combination thereof, be material for realizing the invention in diverse forms thereof.

[0029] The foregoing disclosure of the preferred embodiments of the present invention has been presented for purposes of illustration and description. It is not intended to be exhaustive or to limit the invention to the precise forms disclosed. Many variations and modifications of the embodiments described herein will be apparent to one of ordinary skill in the art in light of the above disclosure. The scope

of the invention is to be defined only by the claims appended hereto, and by their equivalents.